

Time for resolutions to rejuvenate the spirit

Spending time with God and spiritual commitment is important for people who want to grow in the faith. /PHOTOS / SUPPLIED



It is important to be consistent and to connect with one's inner self

By **Nomvelo Masango** and **Nombuso Kumalo**

The start of the year is an opportunity many believers use to set goals for their spiritual lives. Whether it's attending church more often or striving towards spiritual enrichment and active faith, consistency is key.

Led by Bishop Mosa Sono, Grace Bible Church in Pimville, Soweto, is a spiritual home where many souls are replenished and congregants grow in their faith. On the first Sunday of the year, the church usually hosts around 9,000 congregants per service. In March about 7,000 congregants attend church.

"There are various reasons why the first Sunday would be full and why numbers would slightly decrease thereafter. I believe this sort of trend is true for many other churches too. Sometimes people just tell themselves they want to go to church, even if it's just once and that's why they come on the first Sunday only," says Sono.

He believes the decline in numbers is a result of inconsistency where people's spiritual goals are concerned.

"Around this time, I always preach about the importance of having a vision for your spiritual life. It is important to set realistic goals. Saying you will read multiple Bible chapters every day may be challenging if you have not gotten used to reading even one verse each day. So, set realistic goals for your time spent with God. I always say it's not about how long you do it but how often.

"It is also good to have some-

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one who can hold you accountable, maybe someone you can go to church with every Sunday. As a group of friends, you can even decide to read a particular book in the Bible for a week. At the end of the week, you can discuss and share," Sono says.

He believes a personal relationship with God outside church is important.

"Going to church is important but 1 Corinthians: 14 shows us that church is actually not a place where people go only to receive the word. It is a place where we come to share and strengthen one another. One can only share once they have spent time with God," he says.

Spiritual Growth Outside Religion

The setting of spiritual goals and the yearning to improve oneself each year are a calling from within, says Melanie Hall, a spiritual teacher and relationship expert at the Soul Home Centre in Johannesburg.

"As humans, we are always striving for happiness. We want to enjoy greater contentment and ease in our lives, while also giving closure to the year gone.

"We deeply desire to restore balance and the sense of oneness in all aspects of our lives as well as to achieve what we believe life should be - whether it is feeling happiness, joy or being content," says Hall.

In seeking spiritual enrichment outside of religion, it is



Bishop Mosa Sono leader of Grace Bible Church in Pimville, Soweto.

necessary to develop a sense of connection and become a student of life.

"In essence it's about developing a sense of connection to yourself, the universe and to every living soul. You will have to learn and open your mind to bring in a greater sense of consciousness, oneness and wholeness," she says.

Nature is also a great teacher and vital part of one's journey of spiritual growth. In nature, there is harmony, peace and no shortage. This brings interconnectedness and abundance. We are all connected through the mind of the universe. Therefore, what you put out

there comes back to you.

According to Hall, spirituality does not have to be bound by rituals and religion. Each person has their own level of spiritual inclination.

"Our souls cry out for spiritual enrichment and everyone has their own level of spirituality and worship. We should be tolerant of everyone's choices.

"People are constantly trying to fill a gap inside and somehow that emptiness is never filled. Recognise your soul's call to reach into yourself. Spiritual work is about inner work. All you need is already within. You just need to rediscover it and grow it," Hall says.

Keeping the faith despite raging storms

By **Nombuso Kumalo**

Tips to stay committed to your spiritual growth

When life's trials become too much to bear, most people seek refuge in spirituality. Greater ease and contentment in our lives are but some of the benefits of spiritual enlightenment.

However, staying on the path may at times prove difficult. Here are some tips to help you stay consistent on your spiritual journey.

Make room in your life

Prioritise your spiritual growth by making time to practice it. This will be different for everyone, and it doesn't have to be a religious ritual. Perhaps you may need to start your day half an hour earlier to meditate. Or take 10 minutes to recite an affirmative prayer after your lunch break. Remember, anything new requires commitment and patience. This is your journey and you will only reap what you have sown.

Discipline is key

Once you have created a schedule for yourself, sticking to it is the trickiest part. As spirituality is a journey of continuous learning and seeking knowledge, being disciplined will determine how far you progress. Progress, no matter how small is significant. Remember that there is always room to adjust your schedule to suit your life at the present moment.

Find what works for you

Becoming more spiritually inclined could restore the sense of oneness with ourselves. Take the time to find out what works for you. If you believe that meditation doesn't align with your values and belief system, you can try something else. Keep in mind how much time you can dedicate to it, whether there are learning resources available to assist in further knowledge and if it draws you closer to your best self.



Melanie Hall is a spiritual teacher.